

Turn to the Emotionless by orphan_account

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Summary:

Jonathan had just lost his younger brother Will. His mother has lost it and Jonathan is forced to seek solace in the only moment he enjoyed living in. It is that gap of time right before you drift off, where you do something unique to you before your eyes start to drop and your body seems to melt into the mattress. It disappears once we begin to fear the next stage of it, precious sleep.

Jonathan faces some strange nightmare, some near death experience played on loop every single night. He wants to sleep -- but does the world really let him?

Turn to the Emotionless

Author's Note:

Day 5: Whump and Angst

Yeah, I'm not sure what this fits in as. I wanted to write more, but I myself sort of suck at sleeping and am on the verge of just... passing out. I'm probably going to rewrite this once I catch up on some sleep.

Jonathan loved the night. He loved the moments before sleep, laid out on his bed, staring out the window, at the ceiling, at the static darkness. He took pleasure in a long shower filled with the skin reddening spray of water followed by the glide of soft cotton against milky skin.

He loves the moments before sleep because they are private because they let him be who he truly is.

For most of his life at night, Jonathan would lean himself against a wall and read. It could be any book, for school, for pleasure, or for simple curiosity. It didn't matter. He would turn all but one light off, bathing himself in a soft golden glow as his fingers reached down to gingerly turn a page. He'd be distracted sometimes, by the mimicry of shadows around him, following his movement. It'd be dim and bad for his eyes, he knows that, but it was so comforting.

On an odd night, he might have his headphones on, a secret mixtape of ambient music surrounding his sleepy soul. All of the lights in his room would be off and he'd angle his head just right to peer out of his bedroom window, the stars a glorious blanket of hopes and memories for him to discover. He could just lie there in the darkness, surrounded by nothing more than his quiet and selective thoughts and memories. Sometimes, it would be a simple colour, and in other times, Jonathan would build himself the world again.

Recently, he found that he treasured the moments where Steve would be on his bed, waiting innocently with a book in his hand. There would be a flicker of wind against his cheek, giving away the

entryway of the boy in his bed. Jonathan didn't mind. In fact, he'd crawl into the bed, slow and shy most nights. He'd drape himself timidly onto Steve's front, chin rested on the elder's sternum.

Steve doesn't have to be there, in fact, no one does, but Jonathan found that the moments before sleep became just that much better with the gentle brush of Steve's fingers at his hip or slow carding of fingers through damn blonde hair.

It lets sleep come so much easier.

He used to love the night.

Ever since the disappearance of his younger brother, Jonathan couldn't sleep. It wasn't the growing concern for his brother that kept him up at night. Nor was it the stress that built from witnessing his mother's deteriorating mental and emotional state. Those he could deal with – his moments drifting between the land of the living and the land of the sleep were designed for introspection, for making peace with the woes of living.

Will's disappearance affected Jonathan in an incomprehensible way.

The first time it happened, Steve had snuck through his window with roses and cuddles, curled himself around the trembling and disoriented form of Jonathan to whisper apologies and hopeful nothings. Enclosed in the warmth of his boyfriend and emotionally and mentally strained from the situation with Will, Jonathan slips from the plane of consciousness.

Jonathan awakens in a realm of eternal darkness. As far as the eye can see, there is nothing. Strangely, it feels as if there is a light, for he could star and saw not blanket of black across his own features.

In these dreams, he sees Will. Ghostly pale, blue-lipped, dark veins and arteries marring Will's childish features. He is running from something, stumbling in an uncoordinated but frantic sprint. Jonathan screams his brother's name, complacent hope and frightened guilt building in his chest. Will doesn't hear Jonathan. He keeps glancing back. Jonathan makes a mad dash towards Will, grasping onto the boy's wrist only for it to turn to sand and dust in his hands. All the while, water as abysmal as the as

reality around him splashed and rippled.

*Jonathan doesn't realise until too late that the movement of water wasn't
from him or Will.*

He hears the predatory growling too late and he turns to see this monster, head split open with rows after rows of teeth just there. Jonathan wants to vomit, he wants to run, he wants to scream. But of all things he could do, he stays still, frozen and petrified to the spot. Like all the times he took the abuse from his bastard of a father, from school, from life – Jonathan Byers stood still.

The beast leaps and Jonathan falls backwards, jolting at the shock of cold water, arms raised in a pathetic attempt to protect his head. Bone-chilling gnarling and haunting whispers over his failure, his uselessness, his pathetic existence bleed from the mouth of the creature. Jonathan knows that it is true but all he does is whimper and shake his head.

He feels the heat of the creature near him and—

He is shaken to reality. Someone was calling his name and petting his hair, whispering something in his ear. He pushes the form aside, terrified and in need of space. Jonathan doesn't realise he is screaming and crying all the while. Desperate cries of his name and a clumsy clutch of arms encircle him, rocking him back and forth while burning tears blur is already foggy vision.

Jonathan fists Steve's shirt and sobs, unsure of what it is his tears are meant to mourn.

It is early morning before Steve manages to get Jonathan to calm down. At that point, Jonathan lifts his reddened and slightly puffy face, peeking meekly at Steve. Steve looks worried, one hand cupped around the back of Jonathan's head, and pulls the younger male back into his chest, asking what happened, pleading softly for an explanation. Jonathan could barely muster a word and remains frustratingly silent through the whole ordeal.

Jonathan would rather hide in the arms of this boy forever. But he'd never say that – it'd get lodged in his throat each and every time and

all he could do is retreat into the safety of his mind.

Night after night, the same dream plays on. The same creature is chasing Will. The same creature notices Jonathan for some reason, despite Will running straight through him. The same creature spits hateful words at Jonathan, tearing at his insecurities, destroying his very being.

Steve found that it was a recurring dream by the third night and hadn't let Jonathan sleep on his own since. By the third night, Jonathan had stopped trying to sleep, lying awake for as long as he could.

But he is useless like that and collapses in exhaustion, forced into that hell once more.

"You look exhausted, Jonny boy," Steve sighs some weeks later, "It's gotten hard to look into your eyes because they're so... dead."

"I want to help, but you have to tell me what is happening first, sweet."

Silence.

That night, Jonathan doesn't sleep. Steve had latched onto Jonathan during the night, stroking sluggish fingers through his mop of blonde, nestled the younger against his slowly rising and falling chest, placed a kiss on his head. Both Jonathan and Steve wait out the moments before sleep catches up. Steve drifts off and Jonathan is left to think.

He hated this moment in life, these arduous hours before he fell back into that loop of closing death, that image of true darkness. He'd be most terrified in these hours. Not because of the jumpy shadows out the corner of his eyes. Nor because of the swirls of green, gold and pink that blurred his vision from extreme exhaustion.

He was terrified because this part of the day led to sleep.

The nights moved on quite the same and each time Jonathan slept less and less. Steve would drop by, cuddle the younger to sleep only to be awoken later on by the same terrified screaming and crying. The same pleas to survive, to live, to be left alone.

Eventually, he didn't sleep at all.

Dark circles smudged his expression. Bloodshot eyes burned as he looked at anything in the day. He was sickly pale, more so than usual. Jonathan has isolated himself again – Nancy had disappeared upon the apparent running away of her friend Barbara; Steve was focused on passing the bare minimum of his classes to head off to college.

He was usually alone in the darkroom.

Until he heard the soft sloshing of chemicals in their trays and screamed, tearing the room up to curl in a corner. The teachers found him under a table, eyes unfocused with dried tears at the corner of his eyes.

Jonathan still keeps his normal routine up as much as he can. He goes to school, comes back, tends to his hysterical mother, showers, and makes his way to bed.

He feels more and more like a shell every day.

He dreads sleeping, he mourns the loss of those *hours* where he'd prepare and bask in the privacy.

Sometimes, he wishes he could stop this cycle of sleep deprivation and constant fear. Jonathan had sat in the bathtub, water up to his shoulders, thinking. He dipped a bit lower till the water covered his nose. He wonders what it'd be like to drown here, to let his breath go and just lay at the bottom of the tub. Would it hurt his lungs? Would that reflex to breath be strong enough?

Would it hurt?

He misses the ability to just fall into a dreamless sleep. The ability to imagine what goofy thing his boyfriend would do the next day. The ability to drop all of his barriers, his discomfort around the school grounds for the painfully shy and awkward boy he truly is. The ability to rejoice in his true self. It has been ripped from him.

He just wants that rest back.

Steve barges into the bathroom just as his lungs begin to ache and demand that he surfaces. Steve yanks the boy out of the tub, wrapping cotton covered arms around the sopping wet body. (Steve noticed what Jonathan was doing later. “I know you’re not sleeping. You’re going to kill yourself if you keep doing it.” “Yeah. I think it is what it wants me to do.” It takes Steve every strand of self-control he had to not explode in rage and discombobulate in in fear for his *Jonathan’s life*.)

“They found him. They found his body. Animal mauled him.”

Jonathan knows that this isn’t true and just laughs bitterly at himself. He knows exactly what his nights had been filled with now. This was no ordinary animal attack, not some excusable accident. Jonathan had been staring into the gaping mouth of that beast night after night, seeing Will’s final moments, hearing his cries alongside his own, seeing the desperation roll off his younger brother to survive *survive survive!*

What’s more, he understands something else as well. Should he really die, he’d land back in that torturous void, living the nightmare again and again – maybe this time, he’d feel the jagged tear of his flesh in its mouth, maybe this time, the heat of the monster’s body would transfer to the heated flow of his blood racing down his chest and legs, maybe. He’d live this cycle over and over again, knowing that it wasn’t him that the beast was latching onto, it was Will. God, dear little Will.

Those dreams, that single nightmare, wasn’t something his mind conjured with dumb luck.

“Steve, I can’t.”

Jonathan breaks down in tears again, pained and hollow sobs muffled by Steve’s shirt. Steve, sweet boy he is, frets over Jonathan, prodding gently for answers (“Can’t what?”), hoists the wet and naked body into his lap and cries too.

Author's Note:

The usual. Unbetaed, feel free to comment -- actually

do comment I'd like advice on what I should do with this because dammit it is a plotless mash of emotions and some introspection.

Anyhow, have a great one!